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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 3957

INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 0794

RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA PRIORITY 0344

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 0935

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 3285

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 0719

UNCLAS STATE 046450

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: CASC PGOV PREL JA

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION PRESSED
WITH JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS

¶11. (SBU) On the margins of the Deputy Secretary's April 9 lunch meeting with Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka, EAP/J raised the international parental child abduction issue with Yasuhiro Kobe, the Director of the Office of the Vice Foreign Minister. EAP/J told Kobe that the Department of State placed the highest priority on the welfare of children who were victims of international parental abduction. The Department was particularly concerned with the Japanese government's unresponsiveness in cases in which American citizen children had been abducted to Japan. Japan's family laws, restrictive privacy laws, and lack of interest in resolving parental abduction cases had sharply limited our efforts to gain consular and parental access to the American citizens children. EAP/J praised Japan for being a signatory to the Hague Conference on Private International Law, and urged Japan to sign the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction as a first step to addressing this issue. EAP/J also explained that the Department had received numerous Congressional and media inquiries on this issue, and that Japan's unresponsiveness was damaging Japan's image.

¶12. (SBU) Kobe said neither he nor VFM Yabunaka were aware of the issue. Embassy of Japan Management First Secretary Kosei Murota said the Japanese Embassy in Washington and First North American Affairs Division were the only Foreign Ministry offices aware of the issue. Murota said the subject was particularly difficult for the foreign ministry to address because the Ministry of Justice had jurisdiction over these cases. EAP/J reiterated that the Foreign Ministry could begin by signing the Hague Convention.

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